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SMOKING, OR NO SMOKING? THAT'S THE QUESTION.

HEAR THE LATE

SIR BENJAMIN C. BRODIE, BART.,

Fell. and Mem. Counc. R.C.S., President of the Royal Society, &c., &c.

WITH CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS, BY "SCRUTATOR,"

AND

EXTRACTS FROM AN OCCASIONAL PAPER OF THE
BRITISH ANTI-TOBACCO SOCIETY,

By DR. COPLAND, F.R.C.P., F.R.S.

Author of the "Dictionary of Practical Medicine," etc.

"HAVING been applied to some time since to join in a petition to the House of Commons that they would appoint a committee to inquire into the effects produced by the prevailing habit of tobacco smoking, I declined to do so; first, because it did not appear to me that such a committee would be very competent to discuss a question of this kind; and, secondly, because, even if they were so, I did not see that it would be possible for Parliament to follow up by any act of legislation the conclusions at which they might have arrived. Nevertheless I am ready to admit that the subject is one of no trifling importance, and well worthy the serious consideration of any one who takes an interest in the present and future well-being of society. From these considerations it is that I now venture to address to you the following observations."

Sir Benjamin Brodie has done good service to the Anti-Tobacco cause, by the employment of his pen; and it is no inconsiderable source of satisfaction to trace this result to an effort to which he refers in the foregoing paragraph. But that does not lessen our regret, that the great weight of the learned Baronet's influence could not be obtained for seeking the appointment of a Committee of the House of Commons, to receive the important medical testimony of the ravages of tobacco on the physical and mental constitutions of the young. Nor will Sir Benjamin be offended at our reminding him that precedent, competency, and power have been established in the case of laudanum, which is strictly parallel to tobacco. In the recent investigations of a Committee of the House of Commons on food adulterations, laudanum was made a topic of inquiry, and, because of its injurious effects, a law was framed to prevent the sale of even a sufficient quantity for medical purposes without the written order of a qualified medical practitioner. Ergo, as it can be unequivocally testified, that the aggregate injury of smoking infinitely exceeds that which results from the use of laudanum, there is infinitely greater reason for the government to interfere, on behalf of the young, in the habit of smoking. But we must hear what Dr. Copland has to say about them.*

* See page 7.

“The empyreumatic oil of tobacco is produced by distillation of that herb at a temperature above that of boiling water. One or two drops of this oil (according to the size of the animal) placed on the tongue will kill a cat in the course of a few minutes. A certain quantity of the oil must be always circulating in the blood of an habitual smoker, and we cannot suppose that the effects of it on the system can be merely negative. Still, I am not prepared to subscribe to the opinion of those who hold that, under all circumstances, and to however moderate an extent it be practised, the smoking of tobacco is prejudicial. The first effect of it is to soothe and tranquillize the nervous system. It allays the pains of hunger, and relieves the uneasy feelings produced by mental and bodily exhaustion. To the soldier who has passed the night in the trenches before a beleaguered town, with only a distant prospect of breakfast when the morning has arrived; to the sailor, contending with the elements in a storm; to the labourer, after a hard day's work; to the traveller in an uncultivated region, with an insufficient supply of food, the use of a cigar or a tobacco pipe may be not only a grateful indulgence, but really beneficial. But the occasional use of it under such circumstances is a very different matter from the habit of constant smoking which prevails in certain classes of society at the present day.”

The next topic which falls under review is tobacco in the blood. Had Sir Benjamin found it convenient to have given us the advantage of his knowledge of the medium through which tobacco gets into the blood, the fact would have gained strength. In the absence of this, for the sake of the young in particular, we may observe that by absorption, and in various ways, this is effected. In the mouth and tongue there are absorbents into which the poison enters, and, although smoke does not descend into the lungs, the air which passes through the mouth must obviously be impregnated with the poisonous matter which the smoke contains, and the lungs become the channels of communication to the blood. The smoker usually ejects part of the poisoned saliva, but a considerable portion descends into his stomach, and both by absorption there, and from being mixed with the other contents of the stomach, it becomes part of the chyle and blood, which is taken up by the lacteals and lymphatics. Every smoker ought to ponder the following observations of the late Dr. Marshall Hall:—“The smoker cannot escape the poison of tobacco, it gets into his blood and travels the whole round of his system—it weakens the brain and the whole nervous system—it interferes with the heart's action and the general circulation, and affects every organ and fibre of the frame.” Sir Benjamin has our hearty concurrence in regarding tobacco as a boon to the soldier, the sailor, and the traveller in the circumstances which he has introduced them; but we regret that he has granted a licence to the working-man to smoke when he is tired at night. We should recommend rest and nourishment. *Qy.* Which is best fitted for toil the following day, the smoker or the non-smoker? and which, in the nature of things, lasts the longest? Statistics from poor-houses, hospitals, and lunatic asylums must ultimately be brought to bear on this great question. We regret Sir Benjamin's observations about the soothing and tranquillizing effects of tobacco. Tobacconists as well as smokers, will give Sir Benjamin a vote of thanks for this antidotal prescription.

That Tobacco has a soothing influence on the nerves, like all other narcotic or torpor producing poisons, cannot be doubted, and no one better knew than Sir Benjamin Brodie, the truth of the following observations:—“The grand characteristic of all narcotic substances is, their anti-vital or life-destroying property. When they are not so highly concentrated or energetic as to destroy life instantly, they produce the most powerful, and often the most



violent and continued vital reaction. But when the discriminating sensibilities of the system have been depraved by the habitual use of these substances, and its powers of giving a sympathetic alarm greatly impaired, these same substances, even the most deadly in nature, if the quantity be only commensurate with the degree of physiological depravity, may be habitually introduced into the stomach, and even received into the circulation, and diffused over the whole system, and slowly but surely destroy the constitution, and always greatly increase the liability to disease, and almost certainly create it, and invariably aggravate it, without any symptoms which are ordinarily considered as the evidences of the action of a poison on the living body; but on the contrary, their stimulation is attended with that pleasurable feeling and agreeable mental consciousness which lead the mind to the strongest confidence in their salutary nature and effect."

"The effects of this habit are, indeed, various, the difference depending on difference of constitution and difference in the mode of life otherwise. But, from the best observations which I have been able to make on the subject, I am led to believe that there are very few who do not suffer harm from it, to a greater or less extent. The earliest symptoms are manifested in the derangement of the nervous system. A large proportion of habitual smokers are rendered *lazy and listless, indisposed to bodily and incapable of much mental exertion*. Others suffer from depression of the spirits, amounting to hypochondriasis, which smoking relieves for a time, though it aggravates the evil afterwards. Occasionally there is a general nervous excitability, which, though very much less in degree, partakes of the nature of the *delirium tremens* of drunkards. I have known many individuals to suffer from severe nervous pains, sometimes in one, sometimes in another part of the body. Almost the worst case of neuralgia that ever came under my observation was that of a gentleman who consulted the late Dr. Bright and myself. The pains were universal, and never absent; but during the night they were especially intense, so as almost wholly to prevent sleep. Neither the patient himself nor his medical attendant had any doubts that the disease was to be attributed to his former habit of smoking, on the discontinuance of which he slowly and gradually recovered. An eminent surgeon, who has a great experience in ophthalmic diseases, believes that, in some instances, he has been able to trace blindness from amaurosis to excess in tobacco smoking; the connexion of the two being pretty well established in one case by the fact that, on the practice being left off, the sight of the patient was gradually restored. It would be easy for me to refer to other symptoms indicating deficient power of the nervous system to which smokers are liable; but it is unnecessary for me to do so; and, indeed, there are some which I would rather leave them to imagine for themselves than undertake the description of them myself in writing."

Clause the first has confirmation in the history of a certain Mr. Goodman and the Editor of the *Daily Telegraph*. The former smokes eighty-six cigars, and intelligence has reached us, per *Telegraph*, that the effects of only half of one of the same description compelled the latter to desist. From the subsequent part of this paragraph we have reason upon reason for avoiding the unclean thing. Derangement of the nervous system—lazing—indisposition to bodily, and incapacity for mental exertion—depression of spirits—general nervous irritability—severe nervous pains—amaurosis, and other diseases arising from *deficient nervous power*, and inseparably "some" which Sir Benjamin implies do exist, but which he would rather not explain in writing.

Smokers ! duly consider the delicate, but intelligent and faithful intimation of the illustrious Baronet. It is as though he had said—Smoking has a tendency to diminish that capability which God has given you for transmitting the nature you have received. Of this many are conscious.

Those of us who have the confidence of experienced medical practitioners, know enough to make our blood thrill, both of the personal and transmittal effects of smoking.

“ But the ill effects of tobacco are not confined to the nervous system. In many instances there is a loss of the healthy appetite for food, the imperfect state of the digestion being soon rendered manifest by the loss of flesh and the sallow countenance. It is difficult to say what other diseases may not follow the imperfect assimilation of food continued during a long period of time. So many causes are in operation in the human body which may tend in a greater or lesser degree to the production of organic changes in it, that it is only in some instances we can venture to pronounce as to the precise manner in which a disease that proves mortal has originated. From cases, however, which have fallen under my own observation, and from a consideration of all the circumstances, I cannot entertain a doubt that, if we could obtain accurate statistics on the subject, we should find that the value of life in inveterate smokers is considerably below the average. Nor is this opinion in any degree contradicted by the fact that there are individuals who, in spite of the inhalation of tobacco smoke live to be old, and without any material derangement of the health ; analogous exceptions to the general rule being met with in the case of those who have indulged too freely in the use of spirituous and fermented liquors.”

The sentiments contained in the foregoing paragraph are all suggestive, and the reader will do well to ponder over them at his leisure, and consider whether he can derive from fumes of tobacco, an equivalent for the loss of time and money—for although Sir Benjamin did not mention these, it was not because he thought them unimportant—and the more serious loss of health and the long train of ensuing inevitable ills.

“ In the early part of the present century, tobacco smoking was almost wholly confined to what are commonly called the lower grades of society. It was only every now and then that any one who wished to be considered a gentleman was addicted to it. But since the war on the Spanish Peninsula, and the consequent substitution of the cigar for the tobacco pipe, the case has been entirely altered. The greatest smokers at the present time are to be found, not among those who live by their bodily labour, but among those who are more advantageously situated, who have better opportunities of education, and of whom we have a right to expect that they should constitute the most intelligent and thoughtful members of the community. Nor is the practice confined to grown-up men. Boys, even at the best schools, get the habit of smoking, because they think it manly and fashionable to do so ; not unfrequently because they have the example set them by their tutors, and partly because there is no friendly voice to warn them as to the special ill consequences to which it may give rise where the process of growth is not yet completed, and the organs are not yet fully developed.”

Sir Benjamin administers a sharp rebuke to those who ought to be notable examples to their inferiors, because of their better education, and other advantages. “ The vices of a Prince will be taken up by the Court,”—of a medical adviser by his patients—of a father by his son—of a minister by his congregation, &c., &c. Sir Benjamin’s sentiments about boys at school, will find a

response in every bosom where correct principles preponderate, and the remembrance of young men at our schools of medicine, and youths at Oxford and Cambridge, extends the vibration. It was written over Plato's door, "No one may enter here who is not an astrologer." Over every door of entrance to our Schools of Medicine and Theology, it ought to be written, "NO ONE MAY ENTER HERE WHO IS A SMOKER."

"The foregoing observations relate to the habit of smoking as it exists among us at the present time. But a still graver question remains to be considered. What will be the result if this habit be continued by future generations? It is but too true that the sins of the fathers are visited upon their children and their children's children. We may here take warning from the fate of the Red Indians of America. An intelligent American physician gives the following explanation of the gradual extinction of this remarkable people:—One generation of them become addicted to the use of the firewater. They have a degenerate and comparatively imbecile progeny, who indulge in the same vicious habit with their parents. *Their* progeny is still more degenerate, and after a very few generations the race ceases altogether. We may also take warning from the history of another nation, who some few centuries ago, while following the banners of Solyman the Magnificent, were the terror of Christendom, but who since then, having become more addicted to tobacco smoking than any of the European nations, are now the lazy and lethargic Turks, held in contempt by all civilized communities."

On the preceding paragraph we shall only remark, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

"In thus placing together the consequences of intemperance in the use of alcohol and that in the use of tobacco, I should be sorry to be misunderstood as regarding these two kinds of intemperance to be in an equal degree pernicious and degrading.

"The inveterate tobacco-smoker may be stupid and lazy, and the habit to which he is addicted may gradually tend to shorten his life and deteriorate his offspring, but the dram-drinker is quarrelsome, mischievous, and often criminal. It is under the influence of gin that the burglar and the murderer become fitted for the task which they have undertaken. The best thing that can be said for dram-drinking is, that it induces disease, which carries the poor wretch prematurely to the grave and rids the world of the nuisance. But, unfortunately, in this, as in many other cases, what is wanting in quality is made up in quantity. There are checks on one of these evil habits which there are not on the other. The dram-drinker, or, to use a more general term, the drunkard, is held to be a noxious animal. He is an outcast from all decent society, while there is no such exclusion for the most assiduous smoker."

The foregoing paragraphs being integral, we shall not speak separately of them. Ordinary readers, as we have already had proof, will not distinguish the point of argument, to which too much importance cannot be attached. As we have elsewhere remarked, and as we know of no better figure by which to illustrate our meaning, we repeat it:—In sailing from Italy to Sicily, Scylla, a rock, on one side, and Charybdis, a whirlpool on the other, were both objects of imminent danger: and Scylla, like drink, was descried and excited alarm; tobacco, Charybdis-like, though less observed, proved equally fatal and more dangerous; and Sir Benjamin discriminately says, what is wanting in quality is made up in quantity. As if he had said, tobacco effects are gradual, not like drink which so violently attacks the drinker that he is disabled and abhorred, but they are stealthy, slow, but not less certain:—

"Sly, treacherous miners working in the dark."

The diverse action of the two intoxicants deserve remark. It would aggravate the effects of strong drink to add tobacco; but the narcotic effects of tobacco are relieved by the use of stimulants. Instances have come within our knowledge of smokers, being unable to stand after excessive smoking; but the administration of stimulants have counteracted the effects of the narcotic poison, and enabled them to get on their legs.

We caution the reader against both spirits and tobacco; but the truth must be told—effects are produced by tobacco which cannot be produced by any other commodity to which mankind daily resort, inasmuch as, primarily, the poison of tobacco is more potent than that of any other commodity; and, secondarily, that tobacco is the only poison which is not diluted.

“The comparison of the effects of tobacco with those of alcohol, leads to the consideration of a much wider question than that with which I set out. In all ages of which we have any record, mankind have been in the habit of resorting to the use of certain vegetable productions, not as contributing to nourishment, but on account of their having some peculiar influence as stimulants or sedatives (or in some other way) on the nervous system. Tobacco, alcohol, the Indian hemp, the kava of the South Sea Islanders, the Paraguay tea, coffee, and even tea, belong to this category. A disposition so universal may almost be regarded as an instinct, and there is sufficient reason to believe that, within certain limits, the indulgence of the instinct is useful. But we must not abuse our instincts. This is one of the most important rules which man, as a responsible being, both for his own sake and for that of others, is bound to observe. Even such moderate agents as tea and coffee, taken in excess, are prejudicial. How much more so are tobacco and alcohol, tending, as they do, not only to the degradation of the individual, but to that of future generations of our species.”

The disposition to have recourse to the articles enumerated by Sir Benjamin, naturally suggests the inquiry, Is not one of these sufficient without resorting to another? We hope thousands will take warning by the weighty sentence with which Sir Benjamin concludes the antecedent paragraph.

“If tobacco-smokers would limit themselves to the occasional indulgence of their appetite, they would do little harm either to themselves or others; but there is always danger that a sensual habit once begun may be carried to excess, and that danger is never so great as in the case of those who are not compelled by the necessities of their situation to be actively employed. For such persons the prudent course is to abstain from smoking altogether.

“Trusting that you and your readers will excuse me for having occupied so large a space in your columns,

“I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

“Aug. 27, 1860.

B. C. BRODIE.”

Sir Benjamin's remarks about tobacco-smokers limiting themselves, will inevitably undo much that he designed to do. Moderation is the great antagonist to reform. The editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, in a review of Sir Benjamin's letter, calls six pipes or three cigars per diem moderation; but he has omitted the following essential data:—the age of the smoker—the quality of the tobacco—the length of time he must abuse himself with tobacco, before he can smoke the quantity which he calls moderation—the benefit he will derive from it, and the account which he has to render for the misuse of his money and the waste of his time. Fain would we hope to see a leader in the *Telegraph* headed—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with

all thy heart, with all thy mind with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and thy *neighbour* as *thyself*." Then should we see how strenuously the editor would employ his pen in proving the extent to which smoking militates against compliance with those sacred injunctions. Mr. Martin, sen., of Reigate, then in the 81st year of his age, in a recent address to medical students, said,—“Notwithstanding the argument, if it can be so called, as to the comparative injury of smoking in moderation or excess—why smoke at all? it is inconsistent with the habits of the true gentleman—unexceptional morals, refined manners, with a well furnished and an enlightened mind.”

The learned editor of the *Lancet* concurs in our views, by saying—“It might have been desired in the interests of society, perhaps, that the distinguished writer had confined himself to the enumeration of those striking experiences; for it may almost be feared, that the encouragement to smoking held out in one part of the letter will neutralize the judicious and emphatic warnings which we quote.”

OCCASIONAL PAPER, BY DR. COPLAND.

“THE habit of smoking tobacco has given rise to the following ill effects, which have come under my observation in numerous instances, and that of all the medical men with whom I am acquainted. I shall state the bad effects of this poison categorically, premising that chewing tobacco is the most injurious, smoking not much less so, and snuffing least, although also most decidedly injurious. As smoking holds a middle position of these three injurious habits, or vices, especially when adopted by the young, I shall, therefore, make it represent the others.

“1. Smoking weakens the digestive and assimilating functions, impairs the due elaboration of the chyle and of the blood, and prevents a healthy nutrition of the several structures of the body. Hence result, especially in young persons, an arrest of the growth of the body; low stature; a pallid and sallow hue of the surface; an insufficient and an unhealthy supply of blood, and weak bodily powers. . . . In persons more advanced in life, these effects, although longer in making their appearance, supervene at last, and with a celerity in proportion to the extent to which this vile habit is carried.

“2. Smoking generates thirst and vital depression; and to remove these, the use of stimulating liquors is resorted to, and often carried to a most injurious extent. Thus two of the most debasing habits and vices to which human nature can be degraded are indulged in, to the injury of the individual thus addicted, to the shortening of his life, and to the injury and ruin of his offspring.

“3. Smoking weakens the nervous powers; favours a dreamy, imaginative, and imbecile state of existence; produces indolence and incapability of manly or continued exertion; and sinks its votary into a state of careless or maudlin inactivity and selfish enjoyment of his vice. He ultimately becomes partially, but generally, paralysed in mind and body—he is subject to tremors and numerous nervous ailments, and has recourse to stimulants for their relief. These his vices cannot abate, however indulged in, and he ultimately dies a drivelling idiot, an imbecile paralytic, or a sufferer from internal organic disease, at an age many years short of the average duration of life. These results are not always prevented by relinquishing the habit,

after a long continuance, or a very early adoption of it. These injurious effects often do not appear until very late in life."

**THE REJECTED
MEMORIAL OF THE BRITISH ANTI-TOBACCO SOCIETY.**

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE LORD VISCOUNT PALMERSTON,
FIRST LORD OF HER MAJESTY'S TREASURY, &c., &c.

We whose names are hereunto subjoined, earnestly invite your Lordship's considerations of the following Memorial:—

To observing men, and especially to many leading members of the Medical profession, it has, for a considerable time past, been apparent that the youthful population of our country has been gradually undergoing very considerable physical deterioration, notwithstanding the many favourable existing circumstances, which, but for some greatly counteracting cause, or causes, would have produced a directly opposite result.

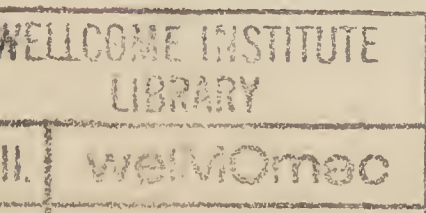
One eminent member of the medical profession says, "I have never before seen so many pale faces, small features, and slender figures, as at the present time;" nor does this remark apply to any particular class of the community or to any particular locality.

The discussion in the pages of the *Lancet* on the Tobacco question, in 1857, elicited from the Medical body a large amount of evidence on the physical and mental evils which are unmistakably traceable to the practice of smoking, more especially when the habit is commenced early in life, and as "youth is the flower of a nation," your Memorialists deeply lament that a habit, which militates so much against its healthy cultivation to maturity, should be so generally practised among all classes of the rising race.

By one of the writers in the *Lancet*, and one whose opportunities of acquiring information on the subject have been very extensive, it was said—"If the habit of smoking continues to increase, as it has done during the last ten or twelve years, I believe that England will sink in the scale of nations."

On this particular feature of the question, your Memorialists feel that too much stress cannot be laid, inasmuch as one main source of a nation's power is constituted by the physical energy of the people, and therefore the deduction is indisputable, that if smoking be a cause of detraction from physical energy, unless something be done to prevent the continuance, and rapid increase of this habit by the young, the ultimate decline of the nation is inevitable.

These considerations, blended with the conviction that the subject lies within the province of the legislature, have induced your Memorialists to suggest to your Lordship, that in order to obtain the important Medical information which is necessary to deal with this question, in a manner commensurate to its magnitude, the appointment of a Committee of the Honourable House, of which your Lordship a member, appears to be not only desirable, but also absolutely imperative, and we trust that your Lordship will concur in this view and take measures accordingly for such appointment.



LONDON: F. PITMAN, Paternoster Row.

